Franz Liszt's *Psalm XVIII*

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In the summer of 1860, Franz Liszt still believed that he and his longtime companion, the Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, were to be married in the very near future. The obstacles to their union were fewer. The princess's first husband, Nicholas, had himself obtained a Protestant divorce in 1855 and remarried the following year. This did not, of course, remove the objections of the Roman Catholic Church, whose teachings concerning divorce not only threatened their daughter, the Princess Marie, with bastardy (although Marie Sayn-Wittgenstein had come of age and married, inheriting the fortune her mother had been so careful to protect for her), but threatened Princess Carolyne herself with bigamy should she marry again.[1] However, her Protestant divorce was a liberating step and, most important, Liszt was well on his way to removing himself from the stultifying and philistine atmosphere of the Weimar court.[2]

Liszt's compositions of this period are many and varied, ranging from revisions of earlier Lieder and the publication of new songs written for the Weimar soprano Emmy Genast,[3] to the superb piano transcriptions of music from *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore* and the first *Mephisto Waltz*. But increasingly he was turning his attention to religious texts,[4] an outward manifestation of the pull of Rome by this point and his now unmistakable and public interest in religion.[5] Some might find it remarkable that the text Liszt chose to set to music, that of *Psalm XVIII,* was picked after one of the severest blows he was ever to suffer--the death on December 13, 1859, of his only son, Daniel.[6] Yet, "Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei" reflects Liszt's steadfast faith in God. Whatever problems had beset the composer in the past months, and whatever difficulties faced him, Liszt's faith not only consoled him but gave him the strength to forge ahead with a new turn in his life's course at the age of orty-nine. Liszt believed in God's eternal plan, and looked forward to the new phase of his life with courage.

Liszt wrote *Psalm XVIII* expressly for Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, who, in May 1860, had left for Rome with the avowed intention of securing a papal annulment of her first marriage--a sine qua non before a lawful marriage to Liszt was possible.[7] On the day after she left Weimar, Liszt quoted the Latin text incipit in a letter to her, lamenting movingly how she was already missed and how his life resounded with her presence.[8] It is likely that he was working this time with the manuscript now preserved in the Moldenhauer Archives, the earliest extant source for the piece. However, the evidence for this is inferential at best: writing to Agnes Street-Klindworth on August 7, 1860, Liszt noted that "For ten days I haven't budged from my room and am working on a new psalm: 'Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei,' for which the setting rushes from my heart."[9] He completed the piece August 20, 1860, according to the date inscribed on one of the later orchestral

manuscripts.[10] Immediately upon finishing, Liszt described the work to the princess in detail on August 22, 1860, a letter all the more remarkable because in it he actually cites the number of measures and pages of score of the finished piece:

While you were listening to the Psalm 'Coeli enarrant' in Sta Maria Maggiore, I was working at mine for male-voice choir. I finished it yesterday, and it seems to have turned out not at all badly. There are just over 300 bars, 30 pages of full score distinctly hieratic in character. I have made two versions, one in Latin, the other in German. I still have to arrange the instrumentation in various forms, in such a way that it may be performed with small resources, with organ alone if need be, or else with full orchestra, or furthermore in the open air, during some festival of male-voice choirs--a very frequent occurrence in Germany, Holland, and Belgium. In the latter event it needs only brass instruments, horns, trumpets, and trombones, together with a few clarinets. I hope to produce the 'Coeli enarrant' for you in these three versions.[11]

Liszt's commentary suggests that the Moldenhauer manuscript was his first draft, and that the preparation of the "three versions" (Weimar MSS WRgs B8a-c: the Latin version, and the fleshing out of the original score for various orchestral combinations and the individual vocal parts) was the work that occupied him during the summer--at least from circa July 29 through August 20. Three weeks later, on September 14, 1860, Liszt drew up his Last Will and Testament, appending to it a list of compositions, still in manuscript, that he wished Carolyne to oversee through publication if he should die before her. Most of the works he listed were sacred, and the unpublished *Psalm XVIII headed the group*.[12]

The first performance was given a year later by the Weimar Männergesang-Verein on June 25, 1861, in the setting for four-part men's choir and accompaniment.[13] While it was obviously Liszt's intention to publish the work quickly, this did not happen, although he sent one manuscript of the completed orchestral version to his Leipzig publisher, Kahnt Verlag, after the first performance.[14] For some reason, Kahnt never issued the score, and Liszt had to request the return of the copy held by Kahnt in 1868, in preparation for a projected performance by the Wiener Männergesang-Verein at their twenty-fifth anniversary on October 11, 1868.[15] By this time, Liszt had resubmitted the work to Schuberth, who issued it in 1871.[16]

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The manuscript preserved in the Moldenhauer Archives was acquired by the Wilhelm Heyer Museum in Cologne some time after the princess's death in March 1887. It was sold in 1926 to an unknown buyer,[17] and in 1944 it was sold again at auction by Sotheby's to Heinrich Eisemann.[18] From that point until its purchase by Moldenhauer, its whereabouts were unknown.

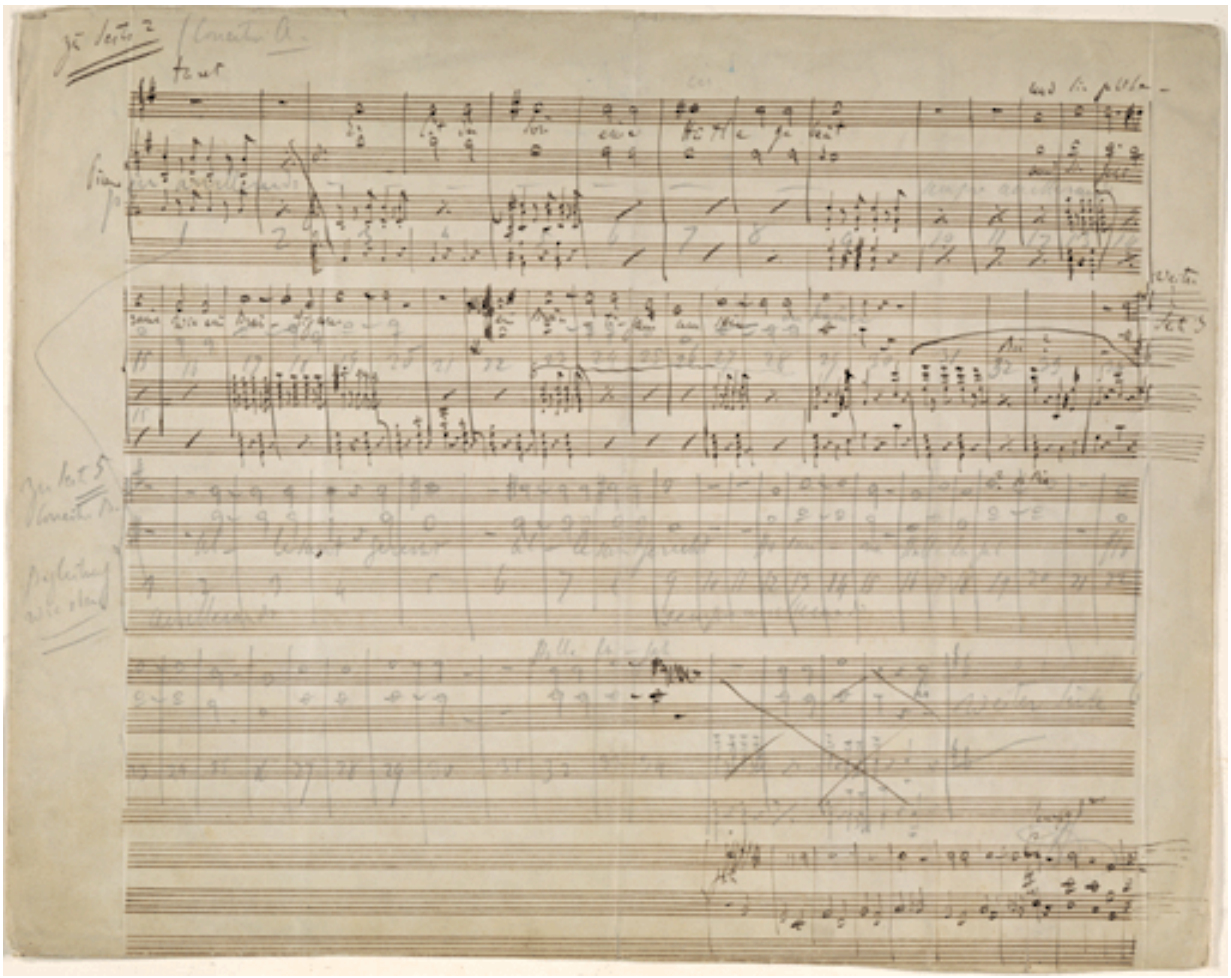
There are no extant sketches for the work. Although only a relatively small manuscript, the Moldenhauer draft encapsulates the complexity and problematic nature of the Liszt sources, the result of the composer's restless and mercurial mind. Liszt drafted the music on paper associated with his late Weimar works: four eighteen-stave oblong leaves, 27.4 cm. by 34.8 cm.[19] The paper was intended for orchestral work, but Liszt routinely cut the original thirty-six-stave upright bifolios in half. For this piece, he assembled the document using four disjunct leaves on which he paginated only sides 1-6, writing the main body of the music between folios 1v-4r. He used a four-stave system, one tenor and one bass staff above a two-stave brace identified only as "Begleitung." On the last page of the manuscript (folio 4v), Liszt noted "Piano" in the margin of the accompaniment system. While it is generally assumed that the principal instrumental accompaniment for this work was organ, that would have been written as usual on three staves (manuals and pedal). However, at this early stage of composition, two staves would have been sufficient for Liszt's purposes. As was his habit, Liszt left space in between the staves for the inevitable corrections.

Despite his emphasis to Princess Carolyne on a version in Latin, it is clear from this manuscript that Liszt's initial setting was for a German text: "Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes." He set only verses 1-10 of the fifteen available: in verse 5, he omitted the words "er hat der Sonne eine Hütte in denselben gemacht," and in verse 7 he left out the words "Sie gehet auf an einem Ende des Himmels, und läuft um bis wieder an dasselbe Ende," perhaps because they dampened the uplifting quality of the remainder of the text. He also altered the word order of the subsequent phrase ("und bleibt nichts vor ihrer Hitze verborgen"), something that happens quite often in his works. The substantial conclusion of the piece is based on the words "Hosannah" and "Hallelujah"--neither part of the original psalm text. For the most part, the text was written above the topmost (tenor) staff in the autograph. The time signature for the work was originally C, and Liszt's first draft of the orchestration for wind ensemble (WRgs MS B8b^{3}) is also in C, but all subsequent sources are in 'cut-time.' At some later point, after Liszt began to work on his first draft of the orchestration, he went back to the time signature of the Moldenhauer draft and changed C to 'cut-time' in lead.

One can see immediately that Liszt wrote the music rapidly, and the score appears in many places to be incomplete. Although the general torso of the work remained unchanged, as we would expect, the reading transmitted in the Moldenhauer manuscript differs in many

musical and textual ways from Liszt's final version. In his description of this manuscript for the Heyer collection sale, Kinsky pointed out several salient differences between the draft and the printed score, most notably, the four-measure introduction in the draft which was later expanded to seventeen measures in the printed edition. But Liszt also added much in the way of connecting material, a familiar compositional idiosyncrasy.[20] Such passages, for example at rehearsal letter B of the final version, are noticeably absent in this draft (four measures following measure 36), as are his final thoughts on the ending of the work, rehearsal letters P-R, which Liszt further extended.[21]

The choral parts underwent considerable reworking: as Kinsky pointed out, many sections originally conceived in four parts were later handled in unison, thereby highlighting the psalm text.[22] While Liszt made minor adjustments to the vocal lines, reconfiguring the tenors and basses in both sections, the most noticeable change occurs in the accompaniment. In all of his religious settings, text clarity was of prime importance to Liszt. This explains the two large revision sections found on folios 1v and 3r of the draft, both involving a shift in emphasis from the accompaniment to the vocal parts. The extent



of the revisions is easily seen in the several layers of musical correction which can be differentiated by examining the writing medium, either ink or lead, that Liszt used. The first layer of musical text appears in a gold-flecked brown-black ink. Often, minor corrections were done immediately by scratching off the still wet ink (leaving a white erasure mark on the paper) or by a deletion in the same ink with a correction immediately next to the excised note or word. On a later revision of the manuscript, Liszt used his favorite correcting implement, a lead pencil, and changed the material immediately with the same pencil.[23] A third layer of correction involves a watery brown ink, found throughout over the darker ink and the lead.

The Moldenhauer manuscript shows clearly that Liszt proceeded almost uninterrupted in his first attempt at the composition, working section by section, verse by verse, and setting all the text up through, but not including, the last line of verse 10 in one sitting. This is evident from the composer's own pagination, which was entered in lead pencil after he had completed writing through page 4. The texture of the composition was fairly homophonic up to this point, with little or no contrapuntal activity.[24] However, in choosing to shorten the text, Liszt obviously encountered some difficulty in setting the last verse ("Die Rechte des Herrn sind wahrhaftig, allesamt gerecht"). He apparently rethought the climactic "Hosannah," which clearly called for something more special than his first layer of composition on folio 3r. It would seem that the musical ideas had evolved exponentially in his mind before he had time to write out his original thoughts on paper, hence the great variety in the readings generated in the succeeding orchestral manuscripts.[25]

Liszt began to orchestrate the work, working with a subsequent manuscript he labeled "Instrumentierung" (WRgs MS B8b^{3}) even before he began revising the Moldenhauer draft--specifically, before he changed the large sections on folios 1v and 3r. The evidence for this is clear: some corrections in dark ink for the accompaniment and the large-scale deletions on folios 1v and 3r of the Moldenhauer draft do not appear in this instrumental version. This was a normal occurrence for the composer, and one of the most interesting features of his musical nature: often, the very process of orchestration, or the transposition into another key (for instance, in the case of a song) resulted in a new sonority that, in turn, led to a revision in composition.[26]

Liszt then went back to the original text layer on folio 1v (measures 53 ff.), striking out the relentless quarter/two-eighths figure, opting for the more transparent quarter/eighth motif in a correction written in lead pencil and placed on the last page--up to this point, a blank one. He signaled this correction in the score on folio 1v (page 2) with a "Vide Correctur A letzte Seite": this last side (folio 4v) was still an unnumbered page at this point; the "8" was not added until later.[27] This rhythmic adjustment of the accompaniment was taken from the original musical text layer for the next large deleted section on folio 3r, the

section just preceding the final "Hosannah." When he struck out this passage, he noted above the staff "Vide Correctur B, letzte Seite," entering the corrected music in lead on the last page beneath correction A. At this point, Liszt went back to put in the pagination for the third leaf, but he wrote the number "4" on folio 3r in error, mistakenly thinking that all of page 2 (folio 1v) had been deleted. When he realized his error--that several measures on page 2 were still valid--he crossed out the "4" on folio 3r and changed it to "5," and then crossed out the "5" on folio 3v and changed it to "6." The last leaf (folio 4) was never paginated, although, as we have said, in his corrections, Liszt referred to the last side as "Seite 8" (=folio 4v). Believing he had finally completed the composition, Liszt wrote the letters DG (*Deo Gratias*) after Correction B, letters he often used ceremonially to signal the end of a work. However, it was not the end: he further revised measures 231 ff., writing thirteen measures in the accompaniment in different brown ink *over* the DG in lead at the end.

Further correlation between the two large corrected sections also exists, most notably the harmonic direction in the first few bars. Satisfied with the shape of the composition, Liszt set about to prepare performing copies, using this draft as a basis. However, the layers of correction, and particularly the two revised sections whose corrections appear on folio 4v, had necessitated that Liszt keep good account of the measure numbers. To facilitate this, he had kept a running measure count, still visible in lead pencil at the bottom of each page, for example, 45 at the foot of folio 1r, 87 at the bottom of folio 1v, etc.[28] By this method he kept track for himself of the proportions of the work and, to some extent, ensured that any subsequent copy would be prepared correctly. This was not an uncommon practice for Liszt, especially given the speed with which he wrote.[29]

As we have seen, the Moldenhauer draft represents Liszt's first musical thoughts on *Psalm XVIII*, but because it played such an indispensable part in the sequence of composition, it is impossible to conclude this without describing the source array of the succeeding manuscripts. The Moldenhauer manuscript was followed by Liszt's own rough draft for wind orchestra without the vocal parts, a manuscript now found in Weimar at the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv (WRgs MS B8b[3]). But Liszt's ideas on the piece were already in flux: he was changing the document even as he was orchestrating it. It would have been impossible to prepare orchestral and vocal parts from these scores, even for the most experienced copyists working with Liszt.[30] Therefore, he prepared another full score with the vocal parts including the Latin and German texts (WRgs MS B8a), incorporating the changes he had made in the Moldenhauer manuscript, and inscribed "écrit pour Carolyne / Aôut 60."[31] Choral parts (cataloged as WRgs MSS B8b[1]) used for the first performance in July 1861 are quite interesting because they were based on Liszt's full score, copied by Carl Goetze[32] and then lithographically produced from Goetze's handwritten manuscript by the transfer process.[33] At a later point, the tenor parts were corrected by Liszt himself in lead pencil when he enlarged the introduction from four to seventeen measures. The next sources in the sequence are also found in Weimar: a fair copy of the complete score with German and Latin texts (WRgs MS B8b[1]) in Goetze's hand.[34] Goetze's copy was also used

to prepare the orchestral parts (WRgs MS B8c). The final manuscript in the group is the fair copy of the version for wind orchestra alone (WRgs MS B8b[2]), in the hand of an unknown scribe.

[1] See Donna di Grazia, "Liszt, The Princess, and The Vatican: New Documents Concerning the Events of 1861" (M.A. Thesis, University of California (Davis), 1986); "Liszt and Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein: New Documents on the Wedding that Wasn't," *19th Century Music* XII/2 (Fall 1988): 148-62; and Alan Walker, Liszt, Carolyne, and the Vatican: The Story of a Thwarted Marriage (Stuyvesant, N. Y.: Pendragon Press, 1991).

[2] For the circumstances surrounding Liszt's resignation from his position in Weimar, see Walker, *Franz Liszt II: The Weimar Years*, pp. 494 ff.

[3] Of particular note is Heft VII of the Kahnt *Gesammelte Lieder*, a gemlike collection of songs that were composed over the previous year, among them "Wieder möcht ich dir begegnen," "Die stille Wasserrose," and "Blume und Duft."

[4] Among the works he produced in the immediately preceding years were *Psalm XIII* (1855), the Gran Mass (1855), *Psalm XXIII*, and *Psalm CXXXVII* (August 1859).

[5] Liszt's religious proclivities were never far from the surface. See the discussion of his beliefs in Walker, *Franz Liszt I: The Virtuoso Years*, pp. 101, 117, 132, and 136.

[6] For the heart-rending account of Daniel's death, see Walker, *Franz Liszt II*, pp. 474 ff.

[7] Ibid., p. 521. Although it was not her intention at this point, she was never to return to Weimar.

[8] "Vous êtes la lumière du coin de terre, où il m'est donné de vivre. Tout cette maison est remplie de votre présence, de votre amour, de vos larmes et de votre espérance. '*Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei* '--et chaque pierre ici tressaille de votre souffle, et vous bénit avec moi." Claude Knepper and Pierre-Antoine Huré, eds., *Franz Liszt Correspondence* (1987), p. 405; originally in LaMara, ed., *Franz Liszt. Briefe an die Fürstin Carolyne von S.-W.* V (Leipzig: 1900), p. 5.

[9] "Depuis un dizaine de jours je ne bouge pas ma chambre et travaille à un nouveau Psaume: 'Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei,' dont l'intonation m'a jailli du coeur." LaMara, ed., Briefe an eine Freundin, p. 128. What is particularly charming about this line is Liszt's use of the word "dizaine," to mean ten days in a row. The votive allusion of dizaine referring to a decade, or 10, "Hail Marys," five of which constitute part of the recitation of the rosary, would not have been lost on him.

[10] WRgs MS B8a.

[11] Paul Merrick, *Revolution and Religion in the Music of Liszt* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 149 ff.; originally in LaMara, ed., *Franz Liszt. Briefe an die Fürstin Carolyne von S.-W.* V (Leipzig: 1900), p. 42.

[12] See Walker, *Franz Liszt II*, Appendix I, pp. 555-65; and Emmerich Karl Horvath, *Mein letzter Wille. Testament von Franz Liszt* (Eisenstadt: E. & G. Horvath, 1970). One might ask why Liszt was moved to make a will at this time. The answer is not easily reached, although his intention to leave Weimar after twelve years might have had something to do with it. Walker views Liszt's will and the similar document drawn up by Carolyne in Rome some weeks later as a prenuptial agreement. Carolyne's will was postdated October 23, 1861, the day *after* her anticipated marriage to Liszt on his fiftieth birthday, and signed "Carolyne Liszt." Of course, this will was never to be executed, but it is clear that Liszt had seen the document.

[13] Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch II* (Leipzig: Kommissions-Verlag von Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887), p. 418. The parts for all of Liszt's orchestral works performed in Weimar, both sacred and secular, are slowly reappearing. Most were unavailable since the latter part of Peter Raabe's tenure as Curator of the Liszt Museum (1931-1945) up to the present day; they were stored separately from the remainder of the Liszt orchestral *Nachlass*.

[14] Georg Kinsky, ed., *Musikhistorisches Museum von Wilhelm Heyer in Cöln: Katalog IV*, pp. 699-700, particularly note 2.

[15] Liszt's letter to the conductor Herbeck concerning the projected Viennese performance is reproduced in part by Merrick, *Religion and Revolution*, pp. 149 ff. In it, Liszt stresses just how valuable the conductor is to a performance, an attitude not shared universally by his contemporaries.

[16] Heyer incorrectly gives 1874 as the date of publication by Schuberth. See note 14, above.

[17] The description by Georg Kinsky in Volume IV of the sale catalog remains the standard reference for the work, although there are several errors that will be corrected seq.

[18] The Sotheby sale description incorrectly described the last page of the manuscript as another composition, giving the German text, "Die Rechte des Herrn sind wahrhaftig," separately. See Alec Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), pp. 74 and 141, for material on Eisemann.

[19] Paper No. 97; used primarily in 1859-1861. See Mueller, "Liszt's Tasso Sketchbook: Studies in Sources and Revisions" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1986), pp. 386 ff. Other works inscribed on this paper include Liszt's keyboard transcriptions of the choral fugue "Lob und Ehre und Preis und Gewalt" from Bach's Cantata 21 *(Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis), Aus tiefer Noth, Der Fliegende Holländer, the Cantico di San Francesco*, and the *Berceuse*, among others.

[20] For a full discussion of Liszt's working methods, see Mueller, op. cit., pp. 328 ff.

[21] Kinsky, *Heyer-Katalog*, pp. 699-173;700.

[22] Kinsky, *Heyer-Katalog*, pp. 699.

[23] See Mueller, op. cit., pp. 98 ff. for a complete discussion of the hierarchy of Liszt's methods of correction and revision.

[24] Liszt himself described the piece as "very simple and massive--like a *monolith*." See Merrick, *Religion and Revolution*, p. 150; originally in Constance Bache, trans., *Letters of Franz Liszt II* (London: H. Grevel, 1894), p. 148.

[25] There are a number of songs, for instance, in which the initial state appears to be a fully realized draft put down without any predecessors, followed by numerous revisions--both of component sections and states of the music. See Mueller, "Re-evaluating the Liszt Chronology: The Case of *Anfangs wollt ich fast verzagen," 19th Century Music* XII/2 (1988): 132-47.

[26] See Mueller, "Liszt's *Tasso* Sketchbook," pp. 128 ff., 331 ff.; and "Revising the Liszt Chronology."

[27] Number "8" in parentheses was clearly added after the remainder of the "Vide Correctur" notes.

[28] When preparing the autograph for the B-Minor Sonata, for example, Liszt included a numbering sequence in the same location on the folios for a similar purpose.

[29] Before the present day, the unsophisticated analysis of the Liszt manuscripts and the layers of compositional planning they illustrate have hindered the establishment of a firm chronology for many important works in the oeuvre. See Mueller, "Liszt's *Tasso* Sketchbook," pp. 98 ff.

[30] On the function of members of the Liszt scriptorium in Weimar, see Mueller, op. cit., pp. 31 ff.

[31] It is apparent that the inscription may have been added later. This manuscript includes a line with the rubric "Clavierauszug," in addition to the organ part already in the score.

[32] Carl Goetze was one of Liszt's principal Weimar copyists and a choir director at the *Hoftheater*.

[33] On the occurrence of transfer process printing in Liszt's oeuvre, see Mueller, op. cit., pp. 171 ff.

[34] Kinsky, *Heyer-Katalog*, p. 700. This manuscript, sent to Kahnt for publication, is a unique document because it bears printers' markings for both Kahnt and Schuberth.